

**“... towards the better attaynyng of thys langage...”**  
**French as a Subject for Study in Early Tudor England**

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14,466 words

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts (Coursework) in History  
History and Classics Program  
School of Humanities  
University of Tasmania  
December 2014

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## Acknowledgements

My supervisor Professor Michael Bennett has provided thought-provoking and inspiring guidance and feedback throughout the very long development of this thesis and indeed my entire venture into the study of history. I am very grateful for the lights he shone for me every time I got lost in the big picture.

I would also like to thank Dr Elizabeth Freeman for her enthusiastic facilitation of my fascinating two-week exploration of the reading habits of nuns. It turned out to be a detour – leaving no mark on my final thesis - but it was certainly an intriguing and motivating interlude.

As has become her habit, my dear cousin Traci Rapson has shouldered the burden of supporting and encouraging me throughout my unpredictable and frustrating episodes of ill health. Her unfailing patience, endless ideas for making things better and adorable granddaughters are a marvellous light in my life.

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# Introduction

In January 1506, a storm forced Philip, Archduke of Austria and King of Castile and Leon, and his wife Joanna, sister of Catherine of Aragon the dowager princess of Wales, to land unexpectedly near Weymouth on the Dorset coast. As the traditional story goes, about twenty-year-old John Russell – the son of a relatively obscure, local gentry family with long and continuing mercantile ties with France – was called upon to act as translator and then to accompany the royal visitors to the court at Windsor. His performance at these tasks apparently so impressed Henry VII that Russell was soon appointed to the king's chamber. How young Russell acquired enough foreign language skills and cosmopolitan polish to be chosen for this opportunity and then make such an impression is not certain. He may have encountered foreigners through his family's trading activities in Weymouth or he may, as was claimed in the seventeenth century by Thomas Fuller, have been 'bred beyond the Seas'.<sup>1</sup> Either way, this was not the traditional beginnings of a courtly career – typically a childhood spent in a noble or clerical household, followed perhaps by a period at university or the inns of court. French was clearly not the only skill he possessed. It needed much more than a flair for vernacular languages (he may have spoken Italian and Spanish as well) to succeed in his wide-ranging domestic and overseas appointments, including a number of undercover or espionage activities mostly in France; to weather the storms of Henry VIII's marriages; to be a valued servant to four monarchs; and to be rewarded with increasingly important lands, properties, wealth and titles.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, aspiring young men and careful fathers planning their sons' education would surely have noticed that it was French language skills that

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London, 1662) (I), p. 281, quoted in Diane Willen, *John Russell, First Earl of Bedford: One of the King's Men* (London, 1981), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Willen, *John Russell*, pp. 5, 14, 30, 44 and 95, and Diane Willen, 'Russell, John, first earl of Bedford (c.1485–1555)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24319>, accessed 3 November 2013, np.

launched Russell into a profitable and respected courtly career, whereas an inability to be clearly understood by French-speaking dignitaries or to understand their French was perceived as problematic for early Tudor people engaged in diplomatic activities. Thomas Thirlby – a Cambridge educated lawyer and cleric who would probably have been quite confident in his Latin – was notably embarrassed, during his first diplomatic mission to France, by his inability to understand Francis I and the French king's minister, and apparently took steps to remedy the shortcoming.<sup>3</sup> Inadequate French could even, in certain circumstances, create something of an international incident. In 1513, on a visit to the court of Margaret of Austria, Charles Brandon speaking (or pretending to speak) only limited French, engaged in flirtatious behaviour apparently beyond the bounds of normal after-dinner courtly etiquette, involving the removal of a ring from the Archduchess' hand. As a result, speculation circulated Europe of an impending marriage between them. Margaret, horrified, demanded Henry VIII put a stop to the rumours and prevent Brandon from raising troops in the Netherlands the following year.<sup>4</sup> Hence, for some people in early Tudor England, French language proficiency could provide an entrée to court and its lack could be a public embarrassment – to the individual or even the sovereign.

Recently, historians have pushed the chronology of Anglo-French or the French of England from the fourteenth century to the mid-fifteenth century, and even beyond that point various levels of French reading, writing and speaking skills could be found – among the children of the French wives of kings and noblemen, merchants like William Caxton engaged for long periods of time in trade on the Continent, lawyers arguing and writing in 'law French', fishermen

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<sup>3</sup> C. S. Knighton, 'Thirlby, Thomas (c.1500–1570)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2010 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27184>, accessed 28 July 2014, np, and Muriel St. Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 3 (Chicago, 1981), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> S. J. Gunn, *Charles Brandon: Duke of Suffolk c. 1484–1545* (Oxford, 1988) p. 29, and S. J. Gunn, 'Brandon, Charles, first duke of Suffolk (c.1484–1545)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3260>, accessed 13 August 2014, np.

sharing weather information with their French counterparts, and so on.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the early Tudor period, French was not taught in grammar schools and no records survive to indicate it was taught in the vicinity of universities, as had been the case a century earlier. Learning French was sometimes alluded to in the writings of humanists and educationalists but its study was not analysed or described in anything like the detail associated with Latin education. The study of French was often undertaken by people who were also studying or had previously studied Latin, and, like Latin, was generally only affordable to the elite and well-to-do. The phenomenon was largely confined to courtly and noble circles, although it also included members of the gentry and merchant classes who aspired to careers in royal service. During the first five decades of the Tudor period, a perhaps surprising number of English people can be confirmed as either French speakers or owners of French books, or seem highly likely – given their activities – to have had French language skills.<sup>6</sup> Some people could read French but not speak it and vice versa, some could write French well and some, such as Henry VIII, wrote in a way that suggested their French was largely acquired from conversation rather than through reading and writing.<sup>7</sup> Very few items of French writing will be used as evidence in this thesis due to the difficulty of ascertaining whether or not a French secretary was involved. The proportions of people in each category cannot be reliably determined, nor can degrees of fluency or competency. It is difficult to estimate

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<sup>5</sup> For example see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne *et al*, eds., *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c. 1100-c.1500* (York, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Research for this project has identified 148 people alive during the period 1485-1535 whose French language skills were significant enough to be mentioned by biographers or historians. Of these, at least 30 translated French books for publication, while several others undertook translations with acknowledged assistance. A search of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) has identified approximately 100 other people from this period as likely candidates for French proficiency due to their life experiences and work. A population of 250-300 is of course not a statistical sample and French language skills are more likely to be taken for granted than to be biographically significant or to have been mentioned in early Tudor records. Only a very few people (such as the translator Andrew Chertsey) appear in the ODNB solely as a result of their French language skills.

<sup>7</sup> Kathleen Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England during Tudor and Stuart times, with an Introductory Chapter on the Preceding Period* (Manchester, 1920) at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/40617> accessed 29 August 2013, p. 69.

how onerous the task of learning French was in this period – W. Rothwell has argued that by the fifteenth century, French and English ‘were closer than they had ever been before or will probably be again...’<sup>8</sup> Even disregarding the special cases of Law-French and the continued use of French in English poetry,<sup>9</sup> English words appeared in French texts, French terms appeared in texts ostensibly written in English, and spelling and the word order rules for both languages were much more fluid than they are today. Although they came from a limited socio-economic spectrum, the English people with French language skills were remarkably diverse in terms of where they came from or grew up, their educational, professional and life experiences and their literary interests. Some were raised in London or at court, some spent their childhoods in reasonable proximity to the capital, such as in Essex, Kent, Oxfordshire, others spent their formative years as far afield as Cornwall, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Somerset, Warwickshire, Hampshire, Devon, Derbyshire, Flintshire and the Continent. They included kings and princes, dukes, earls and barons, scholars and writers, churchmen and lawyers, civil servants and clerks, merchants and mayors, gentry and members of parliament, printers and booksellers, soldiers, poets, heralds, doctors and of course French secretaries and tutors. Francophone women can be found among the wives and daughters of kings, noblemen, knights, educationalists, merchants and administrators.

Determining the attitudes of humanist scholars and educationalists toward teaching English children French is challenging. It has been said of Erasmus that ‘It was a principle with him to refuse to learn or even to recognise vernacular languages ... and in Italian as in English he remained dumb to the end.’<sup>10</sup> Erasmus made dismissive remarks about French, describing it as ‘...barbarous and unformed, in which spelling never follows pronunciation,

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<sup>8</sup> W. Rothwell, ‘English and French in England after 1362’, *English Studies*, Vol. 82 No. 6 (2001), p. 558.

<sup>9</sup> For example the use of French terms, mottos and even whole verses in the poetry of John Skelton as late as 1523. See Maurice Pollet, *John Skelton: Poet of Tudor England*, translated by John Warrington (London, 1971), pp 54 and 144.

<sup>10</sup> William Harrison Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus: Concerning the Aim and Method of Education* (Cambridge, 1904), pp. 15-16.



whose sounds are mere noises...'<sup>11</sup> The humanists and educationalists of this period were of course primarily concerned with the teaching and learning of Latin and Greek, but they did not necessarily share Erasmus' assessment of French. Foster Watson has argued that Juan Luis Vives – who remarked in his 1531 work *De tradendis disciplinis*, 'We ought to welcome a good sentence expressed in French or Spanish, whilst we should not countenance corrupt Latin' - held the view that languages had equal capacity as instruments of communication, and that rhetoric and eloquence did not depend on the language employed.<sup>12</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot implied that the upbringing for sons of noblemen and indeed anyone aspiring to be a gentleman included learning grammatically good French, expecting that - given the educational program he recommended - the child will '... as soon speak good Latin as he may do pure French...'<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to consider the evidence for several trends and developments in the teaching and learning of French that repositioned it from a casually learned, second vernacular, with roots in the Norman Conquest, to a subject deserving deliberate and serious study and which came to be taught and learned in similar ways to Latin. I will argue that in the early Tudor period, the study of French – aimed at understanding and speaking French as it was spoken in France, particularly in French courtly circles – was, in certain circumstances, a careful investment, planned for their children by aspiring parents and by adults who could see benefits to their own careers. English children and young people were sent to French-speaking courts and households on the Continent, French tutors were employed in England and new sorts of textbooks were written, printed and reprinted for English people wishing to study French. These activities all appear to have been - as John Palsgrave wrote

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<sup>11</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, 'De Ratione Studii' in Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus: Concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>12</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *Vives : On Education: A Translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives*, translation and introduction by Foster Watson (Totawa, N.J., 1971), pp. cxxviii-cxxix and 296.

<sup>13</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, edited with introduction by S.E. Lehmberg (London, 1962), p. 28.

in his 1530 French grammar *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse* – aimed ‘...towards the better attaynyng of thys langage...’<sup>14</sup> Chapter 1 will consider the means to learning French adopted in this period, on the Continent and within English household schools that emphasised the learning of French. It will survey the French manuals published by William Caxton, Richard Pynson and Wynken de Worde in the late fifteenth century and examine the first English language textbooks of French grammar and pronunciation made by Alexander Barclay and Pierre Valence in the 1520s, and John Palsgrave and Giles du Wés<sup>15</sup> in the early 1530s. In various ways, each of these authors introduced techniques and content for the teaching and learning of French that had previously only been associated with Latin education. Attempting to address the question of why early Tudor people adopted such methods and means, Chapter 2 will consider the evidence we can glean from their stated intentions toward the study French, as well as the perhaps more circumstantial evidence that comes from the benefits that followed and seems to be associated with their efforts.

Central to this thesis are the seven extant French language manuals and grammars, six of which are available in facsimile from *Early English Books Online*, and some of which were reprinted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The work by Barclay presents a relatively small progression from the traditionally inspired, word and phrase books published by Caxton, Pynson and de Worde. Valence’s grammar was considerably more comprehensive, despite the unconventional absence of a word list. We do not know how the Barclay and Valence textbooks were received or how ground-breaking these first two grammars were perceived to be at the time. By contrast, there is no doubt that the works by Palsgrave and du Wés were appreciated as highly desirable and

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<sup>14</sup> John Palsgrave, ‘Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse compose par maistre lohan Palsgraue Angloyse natyf de Londres, et gradue de Paris’ in F. Génin, ed., *L’Éclaircissement de la Langue François par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Paris, 1852) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L\\_%C3%A9claircissement\\_de\\_la\\_langue\\_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L_%C3%A9claircissement_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y), accessed 10 August 2014, p. iv.

<sup>15</sup> I have chosen to use this spelling for his name because this is how it is held in the records of *Early English Books Online*. His surname is also often spelled as Duwes or Du Wes, and his nineteenth-century editor F. Génin used the spelling du Guez.

significant innovations. Each author made statements about his objectives and intentions for writing these French textbooks, although only Palsgrave made explicit connections between what he was doing and humanist-inspired teaching techniques and innovations that were in vogue or coming into vogue for the study of classical languages. There was no mention of French as a candidate for serious study within the grammars themselves or the writings of influential educationalists of the early Tudor period. A goal for this thesis has therefore been to map the approach, methods and content of these French textbooks and the learning techniques they appear to promote to some of their Latin counterparts and to the teaching practices and principles of influential educationists of the period, in particular Elyot, More, Erasmus, Vives, Colet and Stanbridge. Despite only fleeting mentions that suggest they assumed the target children for their educational theories were also learning French, contemporary authorities on education, notably Elyot (*The Book Named the Governor*) and Vives (*De Tradendis Disciplinis*) have provided a context against which the study of French can be compared. The Lisle letters offer evidence of children being placed in French-speaking households for the particular purpose of learning French and also indicate that, for the boys at least, French was learned deliberately and in tandem with Latin, as an end in itself, not merely as a means. However, being for the most part personal family correspondence – not analysis of educational theories or discussions of family goals and objectives – the Lisle letters provide only circumstantial evidence of the motives and intentions behind the educational choices the Lisles made for their children.

There has, of course, been considerable historical analysis of the French of England, but, to date, the only history focusing on the teaching and use of the French of France in England that has addressed the early Tudor period (although this period comprises only about one-eighth of the work) has been Kathleen Lambley's 1920 *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England during Tudor and Stuart Times*. Lambley's view was that in 'the early part of the

sixteenth century... French began to be studied with more thoroughness...'.<sup>16</sup> She attributed this to improved communications with France, easier and safer travel on the Continent, the arrival of Frenchmen who became language teachers and the increased availability of printed French literature. This thesis will argue that such factors could enable the study of French as a subject or might be outcomes from the study of French, but it is unlikely they would have been the initial inducement for embarking on such study. Although she noted that some French tutors and textbook writers were also schoolmasters, grammarians or associates of the humanists, Lambley did not explore connections between the methods for teaching and learning French and those for Latin. Douglas Kibbee's more recent study, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely, The French Language in England, 1000-1600: Its Status, Description and Instruction*, offered a brief survey of the social groups who learned French, their motives and uses for the languages, focusing particularly on Law-French and translations of French texts. His primary interest was in comparing the various methods used by grammar writers to describe French – use of fonts, elaboration of rules and so on. As many more grammars were produced in the Elizabethan period than in the early Tudor period, these tend to dominate his chapter on the period 1470 to 1600, although Kibbee did recognise Palsgrave's 'Humanistic enthusiasm' and identified some of the connections between French and Latin study that will be examined in this thesis.<sup>17</sup>

Historians of education, such as Nicholas Orme and Joan Simon, have focused on the development of grammar schools and universities, which for this period were predominantly concerned with the teaching of Latin and the knowledge to be found in Latin texts - addressing the learning and desirability of French language skills only peripherally. Orme noted that books owned by the aristocracy tended to be French until the 1470s and made two mentions of people learning French – four-year-old Margaret Plumpton and Katherine of

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<sup>16</sup> Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>17</sup> Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely, The French Language in England, 1000-1600: Its Status, Description and Instruction* (Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 94-106 and 121.

Aragon.<sup>18</sup> Simon acknowledged that many aristocratic households included a French tutor as well as a Latin one, and that Palsgrave's grammar had 'set out to place French on the same footing as Latin',<sup>19</sup> without offering any analysis of how or why this occurred. Despite these arguably understated perspectives, their work has provided valuable context for my discussion of French as a subject to be studied in this period.

Meridee L. Bailey examined the relationships between the learning of courtesy and manners and the acquisition of self-discipline, the employment of children of the nobility, and the possibilities for emulation of noble practices by non-elite, without identifying the study of French as a possible contributing factor. She noted that 'Bourgeois and merchant readers read [French romances] critically and resisted certain notions of behaviour', but this was a matter of resistance to French courtly behaviours rather than to the learning of French *per se*.<sup>20</sup> Gabriele Stein's *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist: A Pioneer in Vernacular Language Description* examined Palsgrave's substantial contribution to describing both English and French in detail, including the ways in which he modelled his grammar on contemporary Greek and Latin grammars and dictionaries.<sup>21</sup>

This thesis will demonstrate that Barclay, Valence and du Wés also made use of humanist innovations in their approach to the teaching of French. It will reveal that despite not being part of the formal education system, the study of French in the early Tudor period was undertaken seriously by a remarkable number of English families; it emulated formal studies, particularly the study of Latin, in many significant ways; and that there were practical reasons for studying French, although these were very different from the traditional administrative uses of Anglo-French.

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<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (London, 1989), pp. 169-170.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Merridee L. Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England c. 1400-1600* (York, 2012), p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Gabriele Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist: A Pioneer in Vernacular Language Description* (Oxford, 1997), p. 55.

# 1 Methods for Studying French in the Early Tudor Period

During the early Tudor period, English people studied French as children and sometimes as adults - at home, in other people's homes, on the Continent and even in prison. People learned or tried to learn French from family or other members of their household, professional tutors and private teachers, travelling or living on the Continent, and from books. Even so, how most of them learned their French was not recorded. Sometimes records indicate how people did not learn their French – the case of Robert Copland is interesting in this way. A translator of many French romances and other light reading material throughout his long career as a printer (from the early 1500s to the 1540s) he also translated more serious and utilitarian works.<sup>22</sup> Copland did not necessarily choose what he would translate - as he wrote in 'The Prologue of the translatoure' of *Kynge Appolyn of Thyre*, 'The which book I Robert Coplande ha[th]... applyed for to translate out of the frensshe language in to our maternal Englysshe tongue at the xortacyon of my forsayd mayster...' <sup>23</sup> – so his translations offer no evidence of his literary tastes, interests or educational background. Copland, we are told '... never came on the sea, nor by the coste thereof...' <sup>24</sup> so we must assume his language skills were not acquired from living or travelling on the Continent or from living somewhere on the English coast where trade and cultural exchange with the Continent occurred. Copland himself claimed 'in scole nor countre / I never take effect', <sup>25</sup> suggesting we must also eliminate Oxford or Cambridge as the source of his French proficiency, and we know that in this period French was

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<sup>22</sup> Mary C. Erler, 'Copland, Robert (fl. 1505–1547)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6265>, accessed 27 October 2013, np.

<sup>23</sup> See the 'Prologue of the Translatoure', Heinrich Steinhöwel, *Kynge Appolyn of Thyre* (London, 1510) at [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqi:res\\_ver=0.2&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:166384180](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqi:res_ver=0.2&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:166384180) accessed 22 September 2014, np.

<sup>24</sup> H.S. Bennett, *English Books & Readers, 1475 to 1557: Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade from Caxton to the Incorporation of the Stationers' Company*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1969), p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> *The Castell of Pleasure* (C6v) cited in Erler, 'Copland, Robert (fl. 1505–1547)', np.

not on the curriculum at any grammar school. Nothing is known of his family background - so it seems unlikely they were well-to-do – and he may have been from the north of England. Both these factors diminish the likelihood of his family employing a French tutor – most of those we can name were associated with the court and nobility - so Copland's acquisition of French literacy remains a mystery.

On the other hand, for some people we do know where and when they studied French. As the Tudor period progressed, increasing numbers of children were sent to European royal courts or placed in continental households for the specific purpose of acquiring or polishing French language skills and manners. The households of young royals led a trend for small groups of children being taught French by highly experienced, well-educated and apparently talented French tutors. Decade by decade, French manuals and phrase books grew in content and complexity, as well as absorbing a number of Latin grammar characteristics and teaching innovations devised by the humanists. This chapter will consider a range of questions associated with whether the study of French was intentional or happenstance and whether the study of French emulated the study of Latin. Were children placed in certain situations for the express purpose of studying French? Was information requested or received about children's progress in their French studies or the tutors' competence? Was a desire to improve French skills through serious study articulated? Were specialist French tutors employed? Did the study of French persist despite changes in circumstances? What similarities can be identified between the new French grammars and the Latin (and Greek) grammars and humanist teaching innovations in the same period? These questions will be addressed in the following three subsections, focusing in turn on the study of French on the Continent, the study of French in England, and the phenomenon of the first four French grammars.

## 1.1 Studying French Abroad

Traditionally, English children had learned French in much the same way as English - from family members, from a nurse or from some other member of the household, such as a chaplain. The Wars of the Roses may have provided French language acquisition opportunities for English people – children as well as adults - finding themselves on the wrong side of the reigning faction and consequently spending periods of time on the Continent. There is something quite different, however, about the politically reactive and somewhat random experience of learning French during a fraught period of exile, or the casual acquisition of French from family members or servants, and the very deliberate and considered placing of English children in French-speaking courts and households a few decades later in the early Tudor period.

In 1513, Thomas Boleyn took the opportunity of a diplomatic mission to the court of Margaret of Austria to place his younger daughter Anne in Margaret's household, in order to learn the skills expected of a lady in royal service and, in particular, to acquire fluency in French. Anne studied under the tutor Symonnet, a member of the ducal household. In the same decade a number of other children and young people from the English aristocracy, including William Sidney (also in 1513) and Edward Guildford (in 1518), spent time at Margaret's court, where Margaret's was bringing up young Charles of Burgundy (later Charles V) and his sisters, surrounded by elite children who were expected to be the next generation of European rulers. The educational environment Margaret of Austria provided has been described as a 'premier finishing school', and a 'Mecca' for learning 'aristocratic and princely behaviour' and it offered opportunities for acquiring polished French, social and courtly skills as well as potentially strategic friendships.<sup>26</sup> The October 1514 marriage of Princess Mary Tudor to King Louis XII of France looked like it was going to provide another opportunity for young English people to acquire excellent French language and courtly polish. Setting out from Dover, Mary had an

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<sup>26</sup> Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn 'The Most Happy'* (Maldon, MA, 2004), pp 18-19.



entourage exceeding one hundred English people, including many young people, such as Edward Seymour who went as one of her pages,<sup>27</sup> and Mary Boleyn.<sup>28</sup> However the day after the wedding, Louis XII summarily dismissed them all, except for a small number of the English ladies. The French opportunity for even the remaining few would not last long; Mary was widowed twelve weeks later, and after a few months most of them had returned to England – though the Boleyn sisters remained.

Perhaps Henry VIII's wars with France in the early 1520s, or the fact that Margaret of Austria no longer had the guardianship of royal children, interrupted continental opportunities for English children's French education, but the next cluster of evidence comes from the 1530s. Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond, was initially tutored in French by Palsgrave. Following a meeting between his father and Francis I at Calais in 1532, thirteen-year-old Richmond was sent - along with the poet Lord Surrey - to further his education at the French court, lodging with the dauphin and travelling with the court on its summer progress.<sup>29</sup> In the same decade, Lord Lisle, Deputy at Calais from 1533 to 1540, made arrangements for his four youngest step-children to be educated in France. Mary and Anne Basset, aged between eleven and thirteen, were sent to live in the distinguished households of M and Mme de Bours at Abbeville and the Seigneur and Mme de Riou at Pont de Remy. Anne stayed with her host family for nearly three years and Mary stayed with hers for four. It appears that neither girl had French language skills before she arrived and that learning French was a priority. Mme de Bours wrote to Lord Lisle soon after

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<sup>27</sup> Barrett L. Beer, 'Seymour, Edward, duke of Somerset (c.1500–1552)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2009, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25159>, accessed 2 September 2014, np.

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Hughes, 'Stafford, Mary (c.1499–1543)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2009 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70719>, accessed 18 October 2014, np.

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England during Tudor and Stuart times, with an Introductory Chapter on the Preceding Period* (Manchester, 1920) at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/40617> accessed 29 August 2013, p. 108, also Beverley A. Murphy, 'Fitzroy, Henry, duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519–1536)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9635>, accessed 17 August 2014, np.

Mary's arrival 'I shall be very glad when soon she can understand the French tongue, for then she will have greater pleasure than she now hath.'<sup>30</sup> We have no evidence of French writing skills as all the letters from Anne and Mary to their mother, and from the host families to the Lises, were written in French, using secretaries or scribes. Anne also had the opportunity to travel extensively with the very well connected Mme de Riou, staying in noble houses and meeting distinguished and noble French families.<sup>31</sup>

At the age of six, the youngest boy, James Basset, was placed with the Abbot of Reading who '... playeth [plieth] him to his learning, both to Latin and to French.'<sup>32</sup> Then, following a stay with the family in Calais, he was sent to the Collège de Calvi, attached to the University of Paris. Writing to Lady Lisle in September 1535, when James was seven or eight years old and had been in Paris for a few months, a family friend expressed concern that James' French was not advancing as well as had been expected, apparently because he and his classmates were required to speak only Latin and because he was living in a house with English people. It was recommended that James ease back on the Latin and be placed in a different household where they would:

...take pains with him. For by mine advice he should be utterly from the company of English men, or else it will hinder the learning of the tongue very much, *which I think most necessary first* to be learned. *And therefore if* he spendyd this year in that and writing, with a little induction to his grammar, if I be not deceived, it would be most to his profit. *For until he perceive* the tongue he shall get little learning at any Frenchman his hand. *And again, it will never be so well taken as now, at the beginning...*

LETTER FROM THOMAS RAINOLDE TO LADY LISLE, AUGUST 1534<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, young James needed to be able to understand French in order to learn Latin in France, but the concern over his French does not seem to have merely been a means to that end. Rainolde went on to recommend that Lady Lisle write to Guillaume Payet - President of the Parlement of Paris in whom James' care

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<sup>30</sup> Muriel St. Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 3 (Chicago, 1981), p. 146.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Alexander Aylmer to Lady Lisle, 4 November 1533, *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>33</sup> *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 3, p. 122.

was entrusted - with instructions that during the next year James was to primarily learn to speak and read French. After about a year in Paris, James was sent to continue his Latin and French studies in a third environment, a crammers at St Omer.<sup>34</sup> The education of George, the second Basset son, aged about eleven when the Lisles left for Calais, is less well documented. By the end of summer 1536, George had joined James at St Omer, apparently with the same goal of studying French and Latin.<sup>35</sup>

Other, more circumstantial evidence exists of people in the early Tudor period learning French while in France. Some notes on the back of a letter to George Cely suggest that he was taking French lessons while in charge of the family business at Calais around 1480.<sup>36</sup> Whether this amounted to serious study or was merely due to his having a French mistress is unknown. Beatrice White wrote that Alexander Barclay spent the years 1500 to 1503 studying in Paris,<sup>37</sup> and although Orme has deemed a continental education to be speculation,<sup>38</sup> Barclay described himself as having '... ben in my youth accustomed and excersysed in two langages of frenche and Englysshe...'<sup>39</sup> It is thought that during the undocumented years between his time at Cambridge (1503-4) and his appointment as tutor to Princess Mary Tudor in 1513, Palsgrave spent time in France undertaking the thorough study of French that would be necessary for him to later produce his grammar.<sup>40</sup> Around 1508, Anthony St

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<sup>34</sup> David Grummitt, 'Plantagenet, Arthur, Viscount Lisle (b. before 1472, d. 1542)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22355>, accessed 17 August 2014, np.

<sup>35</sup> *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 3, pp. 78 and 102.

<sup>36</sup> Alison Hanham, ed., *The Cely Letters, 1472-1488* (London, 1975), pp. 46 and 261.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander Barclay, *The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay from the Original Edition by John Cawood*, edited with introduction by Beatrice White (London, 1928), p. x.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas Orme, 'Barclay, Alexander (c.1484-1552)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1337>, accessed 27 October 2013, np.

<sup>39</sup> 'The prologue of the auctour', A. Barclay, *Here begynneth the introductory to wryte, and to pronounce frenche compyled by Alexander Barclay ompendiously at the comma[n]deme[n]t of the ryght hye excellent and myghty prynce Thomas duke of Northfolke* (London, 1521) at [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99846354](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99846354), accessed 29 December 2013, np.

<sup>40</sup> Gabriele Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist: A Pioneer in Vernacular Language*

Leger, 'when twelve years of age was sent for his Grammar-learning [*sic*] with his tutor into France, for his carriage into Italy, for his philosophy to Cambridg [*sic*], for his law to Gray's Inne...' <sup>41</sup> Although no specific mention is made about Anthony learning French, the sensitive nature of some of his royal assignments later in life – he was special ambassador sent to justify the accession of Mary I to the French king in August 1553 – suggests that his French skills may well have benefitted from that early time spent on the Continent. Furthermore, Anthony could have acquired his Latin grammar equally well at Oxford or Cambridge and with much less expense, placing doubt on the objective of his time in France being solely for that purpose.

These examples show that parents in the early Tudor period were taking advantage of overseas opportunities for their children to learn or study the French of France, relocating children if the learning environment was not optimal and that, for some children, their study occurred in a series of progressively challenging environments. It is also feasible that some of the young men spending time in France pursuing their education in Arts or Theology made a study of French, and that some adults living and doing business on the Continent took advantage of the opportunity as well.

## 1.2 Studying French at Home

For those without the opportunity or desire to send their children abroad, certain English households were known as excellent places for young people to acquire or polish their French language skills. One example was the home of Maud Parr, mother of the future Queen Katherine Parr, who, following the death of her husband in 1517, set up a kind of home school with carefully selected tutors and an educational program organised on a similar curriculum to that of

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*Description* (Oxford, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Alan Bryson, 'St Leger, Sir Anthony (1496?–1559)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24512>, accessed 17 August 2014, np.

Sir Thomas More, but with the additional inclusion of French and Italian.<sup>42</sup> Maud Parr's home developed quite a reputation as a finishing school for boys and girls. Thomas Lord Dacre wrote in 1523 that his grandson '... might learn with her as well as in any place that I know... French and other languages.'<sup>43</sup> This was a household where French books were read, loaned and discussed as candidates for translation into English.<sup>44</sup> Katherine's literary abilities in English and her fluency in French, Italian and Latin, together with her somewhat unusual interests in medicine and numismatics, suggest that the Parr home provided an exceptionally stimulating educational environment and that Maud employed skilled tutors.<sup>45</sup>

Henry VII's children were the first generation of English royals for whom French tutors can be identified, although even for these children the evidence is not clear or complete. Between the ages of ten and fourteen Prince Arthur's education was under the management of Toulouse-born poet and historian Bernard André. André had been Henry VII's official poet, writing in Latin and French, since the beginning of the Tudor period and seems a likely candidate for being an early French tutor to Henry's other children as well. Du Wés claimed to have taught all four of Henry VII's children French.<sup>46</sup> Palsgrave was charged with honing the French language skills of the teenage Princess Mary prior to her anticipated marriage to Charles V and actual marriage to Louis XII. So it appears that Henry VII's children each had a series of two or possibly three French tutors. For the next generation of Tudor royal children Palsgrave (as mentioned above) provided tutoring to Henry VIII's natural son the duke of Richmond, along with

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<sup>42</sup> Susan E. James, 'Katherine [Katherine Parr] (1512–1548)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2012 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4893>, accessed 3 November 2013, np.

<sup>43</sup> Barbara L. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford, 2002), p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (London, 2003), p. 634.

<sup>45</sup> James, 'Katherine [Katherine Parr] (1512–1548)', np.

<sup>46</sup> Gordon Kipling, 'Duwes, Giles [Aegidius de Vadis] (d. 1535)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, 2004 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7575>, accessed 12 September 2013, np.

other boys in Fitzroy's household, including William Parr;<sup>47</sup> and du Wés tutored Princess Mary in both London and Wales.<sup>48</sup> Just beyond the period of focus for this thesis, Jean Belmaine was French tutor to Prince Edward and Princess Elizabeth, and Anthony Rudolph Chevallier was another of her French tutors.

This employment of French tutors for the Tudor children seems to have set a standard that was followed by early Tudor noble families as well as ambitious men such as Thomas Cromwell. It would appear that Cromwell was interested in news of his son's progress in French from Gregory's preceptor:

The order of his studie, as the houres lymyted for the Frenche tongue, writinge, plaienge att weapons, castinge of accompts, pastimes of instruments, and suche others, hath bene devised and directed by the prudent wisdome of Mr Southwell .... amonge [Gregory and his companions] ther is a perpetuall contention, strife, and conflicte, and in maner of an honest envie who shall do beste, not oonlie in the ffrenche ... but also in writhnge, palyenge at weapons...

LETTER FROM HENRY DOWES TO THOMAS CROMWELL, c1531<sup>49</sup>

From the word order of this (undated) letter it could be inferred that Gregory's French studies had some primacy among his other activities. Pierre Valence was Gregory's French tutor at this time and in this letter his French teaching skills were praised as '...a wonderesly compendious, facile, prompte, and redy waye, nott withoute painfull delegeance and laborious industrie ...'.<sup>50</sup> In another phase of his education, Gregory was tutored in French by Palsgrave and at the time of writing his grammar, Valence was French tutor to Henry earl of Lincoln. In addition to André, du Wés, Palsgrave, Belmaine, Chevallier and Valence, several other French tutors (and likely French tutors) can be identified for this period. Nicholas Bourbon, a poet and religious reformer, spent several years in the late 1530s as French tutor to children in the Carew, Norris, Harvey and Dudley

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<sup>47</sup> James, 'Katherine [Katherine Parr] (1512–1548)', np.

<sup>48</sup> Kipling, 'Duwes, Giles [Aegidius de Vadis] (d. 1535)', np.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Ellis, ed., *Original Letters Illustrative of English History, including Numerous Royal Letters from Autographs in the British Museum, the State Papers and one or two other Collections*, 3rd Edition (London, 1846), Vol.1, pp. 341-342.

<sup>50</sup> Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England*, p. 80, also *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, Vol. 2, p. 342.

families.<sup>51</sup> A search for teachers in the England's Immigrants Database provides a little information about four other likely French tutors from their letters of denization, all registered in 1544. Honorie Ballier taught the children of the Lord Admiral, John Dudley, Viscount Lisle.<sup>52</sup> Lambley stated that Ballier was teaching French, but I have not been able to identify any firm evidence of this, though being French-born means he was clearly available to teach French if required.<sup>53</sup> This is also the case for Stephen Colas, who taught the children of Lord Mountjoy.<sup>54</sup> The Italian-born John Verone taught French and Latin to the children of a William Morrys,<sup>55</sup> and the French-born John Verone had been a 'sometime student in Cambridge and does teach gentlemen's children wherein he has been long exercised and does yet continue with intent ever so to persevere.'<sup>56</sup> This latter Verone published a Latin-French-English dictionary in 1552, so he likely taught both languages. Another candidate for French tutor in the 1540s was Stephen Cob or Cobbe - employed in the merchant class household of Stephen Vaughan to tutor his children (and George Brooke, son of Lord Cobham, who was living there). Cob was proficient in Latin, Greek and French and in her twenties Anne Vaughan Locke translated some of Calvin's French sermons.<sup>57</sup> As Vaughan had been eager to improve his own French language skills and, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, found it difficult to achieve this goal as an adult, it seems likely he would have ensured his children had a competent tutor. There is also a hint of French tutors active among the English at Calais. Two letters to Lord Lisle from Jehan Filleul requested permission to

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<sup>51</sup> E. W. Ives, 'Bourbon, Nicholas (c.1503–1549/50)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70782>, accessed 20 August 2014, np.

<sup>52</sup> England's Immigrants 1330 – 1550 (www.hrionline.ac.uk, version 1.0), <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/englandsimmigrants/person/61691> accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England*, p. 122.

<sup>54</sup> England's Immigrants 1330 – 1550 (www.hrionline.ac.uk, version 1.0), <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/englandsimmigrants/person/62259> accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>55</sup> England's Immigrants 1330 – 1550 (www.hrionline.ac.uk, version 1.0), <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/englandsimmigrants/person/61359> accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>56</sup> England's Immigrants 1330 – 1550 (www.hrionline.ac.uk, version 1.0), <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/englandsimmigrants/person/61379> accessed 20 August 2014 .

<sup>57</sup> Anne Vaughan Lock, *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughan Lock*, edited by Susan M. Felch (Tempe, Arizona, 1999), p. xx-xxi.

advertise professional writing and French teaching services, hoping 'there be any who should desire to have the aforesaid art taught to their children...'<sup>58</sup> The existence of tutors at work with unnamed students and the traces of unidentified tutors – a number of people had reputations in the early Tudor period as outstanding linguists but they cannot be associated with particular tutors, such as Katherine Parr and the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke – implies that the extent of this employment of French tutors was greater than the surviving evidence confirms.

Many of the French tutors in this period had more than one subject they could teach – du Wés was also a musician, Palsgrave was also a Latinist, Chevallier was also a Hebraist and so on. Nevertheless, evidence of parents hiring successive French tutors suggests that the study of French by children at home in England – children from the nobility, gentry and merchant classes and children with ambitious parents – was not accidental or unintentional, but was taken seriously and in some cases is known to have spanned many years.

### 1.3 Books for Studying French

Printed books to aid students and teachers were the third, and arguably most innovative, means for studying French in the early Tudor period. They might be categorised as part of the increased abundance of practical guidebooks and manuals that were a feature of the early decades of printing described by Elizabeth Eisenstein, although they do not seem to be associated with a 'scribal backlog' *per se*.<sup>59</sup> There is almost no evidence of how these books were used or who bought them, and there are remarkable differences in the approaches adopted by their authors. In a variety of ways, each of the four French grammars reflected or imitated the goals, theories, teaching methods and books of contemporary humanists and educationalists, including Erasmus, Vives, Elyot,

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<sup>58</sup> *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 5, p. 324.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 26 and 78.



Colet, Lily and Stanbridge. These men were influential in the ways the Latin and Greek languages, and/or the classical and contemporary texts written in these languages, were studied. They were concerned with the education of people who would be kings or their counsellors; with the relationships between learning and practical life, between learning and the development of society; with the concerns of the world; and with the individual's potential and aspirations.<sup>60</sup> The study of French, as will be seen in the remainder of this chapter, can also be linked to these goals.

Leading up to the publication of the first four French grammars, at least three French manuals were available to people in the early decades of the Tudor period. William Caxton's 1480 work, often referred to as *Vocabulary in French and English, or A book to learn French and English*,<sup>61</sup> and the similar volumes printed by Richard Pynson<sup>62</sup> and Wynken de Worde<sup>63</sup> in 1497, were arguably only innovations in the sense of being printed in England and cheap. The Caxton text was probably reworked from a Flemish book and they all resembled medieval French manuals, such as the early fourteenth-century *Livre des mestiers*,<sup>64</sup> and the late fourteenth-century *Maniere de Langage*.<sup>65</sup> They followed a pattern of naming things – parts of the body, food and meals, colours, animals, plants and minerals, types of employment – followed by useful phrases, formulae for addressing people according to rank, prayers, orders for servants, and so on. In addition to these universal matters, Caxton's text supplied words

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<sup>60</sup> Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 61 and 65.

<sup>61</sup> William Caxton, *Here endeth this doctrine at Westmestre by london in fourmes enprinted. In the whiche one euerich may shortly lerne Frenssh and englissh...* (London, 1480) at [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845241](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845241), accessed 29 July 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Anon, *Here is a good boke to lerne to speke French*, (London, 1500?) at [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99836535](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99836535), accessed 29 July 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Anon, *Here begynneth a lytell treatyse for to lerne Englysshe and Frensshe* (London, 1497) at [http://gateway.proquest.com.rp.nla.gov.au/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99836557](http://gateway.proquest.com.rp.nla.gov.au/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99836557), accessed 29 December 2013.

<sup>64</sup> Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England*, p. 45.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

for traders in wool and cloth, and the other two French manuals offered sample business letters. Despite their limitations, it may be that Caxton, de Worde and Pynson envisaged their manuals as tools for a serious study of French rather than mere phrase books for casual or impromptu usage. The frontispiece image of the de Worde manual is strikingly similar to that used in Lily's Latin textbook for beginners, raising questions of whether learning French was being presented as a subject of study like Latin, or whether placing such an image in a French manual gave it a veneer of glamour, appealing to the aspirations of its audience.



Frontispiece image from Wyncken de Worde, *Here begynneeth a lytell treatyse for to lerne Englysshe and Frensshe*, 1497<sup>66</sup>



Frontispiece image from William Lily, *Angli Rudimenta*, 1516<sup>67</sup>

No French textbooks have survived from the next two decades but the 1520s saw a flurry of activity as four men - two English and two French - encouraged by their respective royal or noble patrons, expressed their opinions on how French could or should be studied in England. The publication dates of

<sup>66</sup> Anon, *Here begynneeth a lytell treatyse for to lerne Englysshe and Frensshe*.

<sup>67</sup> William Lily, *Angli Rudimenta* (York, 1516?) at

[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99898917](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99898917), accessed 28 September 2014.

at least two of these textbooks did not necessarily reflect the timing of their composition. Palsgrave probably began his work in 1512, taking some eighteen years to develop and to print all three books, and the exercises from du Wés' book 2 (published in 1533) were probably compiled over three or four years in the mid-1520s, during the course of Princess Mary's French studies. It seems likely that manuscript versions of du Wés' work and preliminary print runs of at least parts of Palsgrave's work were available in court circles well in advance of the official publication dates.<sup>68</sup> Valence indicated his awareness of the contents and extent of Palsgrave's work, and the influence it had on decisions about the contents of his own book writing:

... our intencion was to make up this werke with some short vocabulare, of nownes or wordes, whiche ben mooste commune & vulgar, & belongynge to the dayly speche... I haue consydered that it is no nede, nor necessary, if the lucubracyons, & werkes of mayster pollygraue come in lyght.

PIERRE VALENCE, *INTRODUCTIONS IN FRENSSHE*, 1528<sup>69</sup>

The first English language French grammar was a small book that opened with the words: 'Here begynneth the introductory to wryte, and to pronounce frenche compyled by Alexander Barclay compendiously at the comma[n]deme[n]t of the ryght hye excellent and myghty prynce Thomas duke of Northfolke' and was printed in 1521. Barclay acknowledged that he had made use of old French grammars '...I haue sene the draughtes of other made before my tyme...'<sup>70</sup> He summarised the pronouns and the conjugation of everyday verbs, then provided an eight-page letter-by-letter explanation of French pronunciation.<sup>71</sup> His word lists were not arranged by topic, nor were they strictly alphabetical, but were ordered by starting letter for each word type - nouns, adjectives and verbs – and the grammar was silent on many features of French; for instance, he made no attempt to explain gender or plural forms.

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<sup>68</sup> Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist*, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> See the final page, Pierre Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe [1528]*, (Menston, England, 1967), np.

<sup>70</sup> See 'The prologue of the auctour', Barclay, *Here begynneth the introductory to wryte, and to pronounce frenche*, np.

<sup>71</sup> Barclay, *Here begynneth the introductory to wryte, and to pronounce frenche*, np.

Pierre Valence's grammar, *Introductions in Frensshe, for Henry the yongerle of Lyncoln*, printed by de Worde around 1528, was considerably more comprehensive than Barclay's and according to the author was not intended to criticise anyone else's work, even though it was '... all contrary to them whiche here before haue ben made...'.<sup>72</sup> Valence offered pronunciation guidelines, explaining where in the chest the vowel sounds were made and how to hold the lips, but midway through this section the author seemed to lose hope, writing 'Pronounce echone as he shal please, for to difficyl it is to correct olde erroours.'<sup>73</sup> He asserted that in the 'varyacyons and declensons of all verbes... lyeth all the diffyculte',<sup>74</sup> and much of the book is devoted to setting out the regular verb conjugations for *aimer*/to love, as well as irregular verb examples and showing how verbs work with prepositions. It also included negations, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, use of the article, and several pages of useful, everyday salutations and conversational phrases.<sup>75</sup> Except for the first and last pages, the text was uniformly presented in English on the left hand page and French on the right. Valence made his royal connections very clear to readers (as would Palsgrave and du Wés) – not merely dedicating the work to his student Henry earl of Lincoln but naming Henry's parents - Princess Mary, queen of France and 'the right illustrate and redoubted prynce Charles Brandon... Duke of Suffolke, hygh Marsshall of Englande...'.<sup>76</sup>

Printing for Palsgrave's thousand-page *Lesclaircissement de la langue francoyse* was finally completed in 1530 and it consisted of three books

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<sup>72</sup> See the introductory address to the earl of Lincoln, Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>73</sup> Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>74</sup> See the letter 'To the understanders gretynge' in Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, Palsgrave's 1530 work has been credited with the first English usage for the grammar words/concepts of adverb, phrase, interjection and article, yet Valence used the words adverb and phrase in this earlier work, and research for this thesis has identified clear English explanations for the words interjection and adverb in John Stanbridge's considerably earlier Latin grammar works. For example, see John Stanbridge, *The Long Accydenche* (London, 1513) at [http://gateway.proquest.com/openur1?ctx\\_ver=z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:24079706](http://gateway.proquest.com/openur1?ctx_ver=z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:24079706), accessed 7 October 2014.

<sup>76</sup> See the title page, Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

preceded by a lengthy introduction which explained why learning French was difficult, provided an overview of pronunciation and outlined the rest of the contents. The six-page pronunciation guide contained within the introduction was similar in length to Valence's, but this was just preliminary. The first book contained extended rules and instructions for pronouncing each of the vowels, diphthongs and consonants. It explained the differences between French words on the page and how they were spoken, and concluded with four pages of examples from the works of French prose writers. Each line from these French texts was followed by a sort of phonetic equivalent, showing the student how to sound the French in English terms. The second book contained detailed explanations for the French grammar rules associated with nine parts of language: articles, nouns, pronouns, verbs, participles, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections, together with declension and conjugation rules and examples. The third book explained how to make plural from singular, feminine from masculine and how these would impact verb mode and tense. These grammar rules and examples, illustrated again with text from Chartier and others, included discussion on the ways these rules were sometimes 'corrupted' by negligent French writers and printers. The 'vocabulary', which comprised the largest part of Palsgrave's work, contained considerable additional grammar rules as well as alphabetised English-French lists of nouns, indicating gender and mostly provided in singular form;<sup>77</sup> adjectives; pronouns (grammar rules and examples rather than a list *per se*); numbers, including how numbers were expressed differently by 'lerner men' and 'voulgar people [and] marchaunte men',<sup>78</sup> placement numbers for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> etc., and how concepts of once, twice and so on are expressed in French; verbs (presented in first person

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<sup>77</sup> Some of the choices Palsgrave made in organising his word lists are intriguing, for example he expected the French word *ecclesiastique* to be found by the student looking under M for 'man of the church'. See John Palsgrave, 'Lesclaircissement de la langue francoyse compose par maistre Iohan Palsgraue Angloyse natyf de Londres, et gradue de Paris' in F. Génin, ed., *L'Éclaircissement de la Langue Français par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Paris, 1852) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L\\_%C3%A9claircissement\\_de\\_la\\_langue\\_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L_%C3%A9claircissement_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y), accessed 10 August 2014, p. 318.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 367 and 369.

singular); participles; prepositions (not a word list as such but an organised list of examples in French); adverbs with many examples of each adverb's use and associated everyday phrases and adages; then finally conjunctions and interjections. Palsgrave's textbook had no consistent presentation style – some parts were entirely in English, some were primarily English with French examples and other sections had alternating English and French.

Du Wés' two book volume, *An introductorie for to lerne to rede, to pronounce, and to speake Frenche trewly*, printed in 1533,<sup>79</sup> began with a simple acrostic based on the spelling of his name and, like most of the work, was presented in alternating lines of English and French. Du Wés offered seven short rules for reading and speaking French which explained the pronunciation of vowels, word endings, *s* in various circumstances and *//* in the middle of French words. Each of his rules focused on differences between what was seen on the page and how it was spoken. These were followed by a series of noun word lists which were ordered into topics, loosely following the pattern of traditional manuals, although far more extensive. Beginning with parts of the body, du Wés gave words for the senses and behaviours, men's and women's clothing, household items and food, birds and flora and even amusing animal noises. By this stage in the word lists, phrases were being formed and the student was seeing simple sentences, putting nouns together with verbs. The word lists were interspersed with brief essays on salutations, and light and colour, as well as useful phrases and sentences which demonstrated (rather than discoursed upon) the differences between French and English word order. Next were explanations for pronouns, including gender and number, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and numbers. Verb conjugations were explained and followed by an alphabetised list of verbs (presented in the infinitive) and a series

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<sup>79</sup> Giles du Wés, 'An introductorie for to lerne to rede, to pronounce, and to speake Frenche trewly compyled for the right high, excellent, and most vertuous lady, the lady Mary of Englande, doughter to our most gracious souerayn lorde kyng Henry the eight' in F. Génin, ed., *L'Éclaircissement de la Langue Français par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Paris, 1852) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L\\_%C3%A9claircissement\\_de\\_la\\_langue\\_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L_%C3%A9claircissement_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y), accessed 10 August 2014.

of sample verb conjugations which included how word order changed to form questions. These conjugations were interspersed with additional short rules and explanations. The second book contained a series of increasingly complex and sophisticated French language exercises in the form of poems, dialogues and essays.

As can be seen from this overview, even though the writers of English language French textbooks had the same fundamental aim of teaching French grammar and pronunciation, Barclay, Valence, Palsgrave and du Wés took very different approaches to their task. Humanists generally held the traditional view that 'reducing the vernacular to rules' was impossible and interfered with the 'natural way'.<sup>80</sup> Vives wrote in 1531: 'In a language which is in the continual use of people there is no necessity to frame systematic rules. The language is learned better and more quickly from the people themselves'.<sup>81</sup> Palsgrave's work therefore seems radical, providing not merely general rules but what was intended to be a complete definition of French grammar. The others were more consistent with the prevailing view. Barclay claimed it was not possible to document a complete set of rules for French and that spending time in the company of native speakers or others with '... perfytnes in spekyng the sayd language...' was necessary for proper pronunciation and good grammar.<sup>82</sup> Valence expressed concern that giving or making 'so many rules ... do but trouble and marre the understandynge of people',<sup>83</sup> whereas du Wés asserted that a vernacular language could not be constrained within strict rules and that it was inappropriate for anyone to define the vernacular of a nation to which they did not belong.<sup>84</sup> It has been suggested that, from a humanist perspective, the notion of a vernacular language as a formal subject of study was impossible.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist*, p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *Vives : On Education: A Translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives*, translation and introduction by Foster Watson (Totawa, N.J., 1971), p. 96.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England*, p. 80.

<sup>83</sup> Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>84</sup> Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist* p. 59 and Du Wés, 'An introductorie for to lerne to rede, to pronounce, and to speake Frenche', p. 895.

<sup>85</sup> William Harrison Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus: Concerning the Aim and Method of*

The remainder of this chapter will argue that the four grammar writers were, in fact, presenting French grammar and teaching in a manner that could link it to the prestige associated with Latin; optimise familiarity for the student who was also studying (or had studied) Latin; and take advantage of teaching principles and innovations that were at the forefront of contemporary educational theory.

Although the humanists and educationalists were not necessarily writing monumental volumes containing everything to be learned about Latin, their works in combination – such as John Stanbridge’s widely printed *Accedence* on the eight parts of speech; *Sum es fui* on the forms of the common verbs *sum*, *fero* and their compounds; *Gradus Comparationum* on the comparison of adjectives; *Parvula* on elementary syntax; and *Vocabula*, etc. – may have offered something like Palsgrave’s comprehensive source of grammar. Palsgrave certainly intended this to be the case, writing ‘... we... have by our diligent labours nowe at the last, brought the frenche tong under the rules certayn and preceptes grammaticall, lyke as the other thre parfite tonges be...’<sup>86</sup> The structure of his grammar was essentially the same as Donatus’ *Ars minor* – addressing the eight parts of speech – but in his case beginning with a ninth part, the article.<sup>87</sup> The Valence and du Wés grammars also resonated with humanist principles. Valence documented the approach he had taken with his own students, aiming to avoid older methods that were ‘dark and cumbersome’ and limiting to the enjoyment of speech.<sup>88</sup> Du Wés aimed to write down the practical methods used to teach Princess Mary, her predecessors and his current students,<sup>89</sup> an approach consistent with Colet’s assertion that ‘heryng eloquent men speke, and finally besy imytatyon with tonge and penne’ was a better method for acquiring ‘trewe eloquent speche, than all the tradycion, rules and preceptes of maysters.’<sup>90</sup> In 1512, Erasmus had asserted that learning rules was

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*Education* (Cambridge, 1904), p. 63.

<sup>86</sup> Palsgrave, ‘Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse’, p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist*, p. 71.

<sup>88</sup> See ‘To the understanders greteynge’ Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>89</sup> Du Wés, ‘An introductorie for to lerne to rede, to pronounce, and to speake Frenche’, p. 897.

<sup>90</sup> See ‘A lytell proheme to the booke called *Grammatices Rudimenta* by dean Colet’ in S Knight, *The Life of Dean Colet* (Oxford 1823), p. 390.



not the best way to learn to speak a language – rules should be ‘as few, as simple, and as carefully framed as possible’ – rather, languages should be learned by means of daily interaction with ‘...those accustomed to express themselves with exactness and refinement...’<sup>91</sup>

Each of the first French grammars used concepts from standard Latin grammars, which consistently explained eight parts of speech, that is nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, participles, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections, along with a prescribed set of verb tenses and forms. It has been argued that French and English language structures, verb tenses and so on were being forced to fit Latin grammar categories - due to the prestige of translation activities in this period - and that this gave rise to confusing results.<sup>92</sup> The results and associated duplications may indeed have been confusing, but the reasons for modelling French grammar on Latin were arguably much simpler. French was recognised even then as a Romance language; and, perhaps even more importantly, there simply was no vernacular grammar precedent to guide these authors. As well as adopting Latin grammar constructs and terms, Palsgrave explicitly modelled his work on the Greek grammar of Theodorus Gaza – whose primacy as Greek grammarian had been asserted by Erasmus in 1511 -<sup>93</sup> most noticeably in the way his third book amplified the grammar rules of the second book.<sup>94</sup> It is not at all clear from the grammars whether French students were assumed to have knowledge of Latin and therefore adopting Latin grammar organisation and terminology was expected to make learning French easier. Certainly Latin knowledge was not required – all the Latin grammar concepts used in the French grammars had suitable explanations in English. In just a few places, Valence gave the Latin equivalents to French words, presumably to amplify his English explanations.

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<sup>91</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, ‘*De Ratione Studii*’ in Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus: Concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>92</sup> Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely, The French Language in England, 1000-1600: Its Status, Description and Instruction* (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 155.

<sup>93</sup> Erasmus, *De Ratione Studii*, p. 163.

<sup>94</sup> Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist*, p. 55.

The word lists in the Caxton, de Worde and Pynson French manuals, as well as du Wés' grammar, were organised by topic, an approach that had been commonplace in medieval Latin *nominalia*. They also echoed Elyot's advice:

...there can be nothing more convenient than by little and little ... informing them to know first the names in Latin of all things that come in sight, and to name all the parts of their bodies...

SIR THOMAS ELYOT, *THE BOOK NAMED THE GOVERNOR*, 1531<sup>95</sup>

Du Wés' word lists also bore a strong resemblance to the paper-book technique, an educational aid for Latin students:

Make a book of blank leaves of a proper size. Divide it into certain topics, so as to say, into nests (nidos). In one, jot down the names of those subjects of daily converse, e.g. the mind, body, our occupations, games, clothes, divisions of time, dwellings, foods; in another rare words... in another, idioms... in another, joyous expressions...witty sayings... in another, proverbs... difficult passages...

JUAN LUIS VIVES, *DE TRADENDIS DISCIPLINIS*, 1523<sup>96</sup>

Vives was describing an ongoing task for the student, but the similarity between the form and content of du Wés' word lists and this Latin teaching innovation is striking.<sup>97</sup>

The 1485-6 *Vocabularius breuiloquus* by Guarinus Veronensis had offered a new format for Latin vocabularies, providing lists, in approximate alphabetical order, of various word types – nouns, pronouns and adjectives together, verbs, and all other types of words in a third group. It is not known whether Barclay or Palsgrave were aware of this work when they produced their word lists and, as *Vocabularius breuiloquus* was apparently the only leading lexicographical work with this format, it is not clear whether this similarity was a deliberate attempt to emulate a Latin education innovation or merely coincidental. The commonplace print workshop practice of preparing piles of words in alphabetical

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<sup>95</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, edited with introduction by S.E. Lehmborg (London, 1962), p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Vives, *On Education: A Translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis*, p. 108.

<sup>97</sup> This teaching aid has sometimes been credited to Roger Ascham, who described it in his work *The Scholemaster*, published in the 1580s, which documented the Latin teaching practices he had used earlier in the sixteenth century.

order may also have contributed to this authorial choice.<sup>98</sup>

Du Wés' book of French exercises seems ideally organised for dictation by the teacher and translation by the student and had the added piquancy of often depicting the princess herself. The lightness and humour of these exercises, their mildly moral, political and philosophical topics, along with their gradually increasing complexity of grammar and content, make the second book reminiscent of Erasmus' extremely popular Latin textbook, *The Colloquies*. Jeri L. McIntosh argued that he '... portrayed the royal court as one characterised by thinly disguised sexual banter',<sup>99</sup> but this failed to consider the oaths, insults and sexual undertones that were commonplace in Latin exercises of the time.<sup>100</sup> Vives had firmly recommended that the teacher 'spice' serious grammar lessons:

... with jokes, witty and pleasant stories, lively historical narratives, with proverbs, parables, apophthegms, and with acute short precepts, sometimes lively, sometimes grave. Thus the pupils will drink in willingly, not only the language, but also wisdom and experience in life as well.

JUAN LUIS VIVES, *DE TRADENDIS DISCIPLINIS*, 1523<sup>101</sup>

Du Wés' exercises seem entirely in tune with these recommendations and exemplars. Erasmus also emphasised the desirability of choosing literature and readings that would 'arouse an enthusiasm for virtue'.<sup>102</sup> Du Wés' exercises offered diversions but they also presented learning French as a means of acquiring wisdom or virtue. It has been suggested that - as they both portrayed courtly conversation as a means to learning virtue - du Wés' work either bridged 'the gap between *The Courtier* and the "Mirror for Princes" genre,' or was perhaps 'an early English response' to Castiglione's 1528 work.<sup>103</sup> Aside from the

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<sup>98</sup> Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, p. 100.

<sup>99</sup> Jeri L. McIntosh, 'A Culture of Reverence: Princess Mary's Household 1525-27' in Alice Hunt and Anna Whitlock, eds., *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth* (New York, 2010), p. 119.

<sup>100</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven, 2006), p. 116 and, for an example of sexual undertones see 'The Uneasy Wife' in Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, pp. 212-313.

<sup>101</sup> Vives, *On Education: A Translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis*, p. 133.

<sup>102</sup> M.L. Clarke, 'The Education of a Prince in the Sixteenth Century: Edward VI and James VI and I', *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1978), p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> McIntosh, 'A Culture of Reverence: Princess Mary's Household 1525-27', p. 118.

issue of the exercises dating to Mary's French lessons of c.1524-1527, it is not necessary to look to *The Courtier* for an explanation of this phenomenon. Throughout the Middle Ages, secular learning on any subject had included a concurrent goal of acquiring virtue and good manners.<sup>104</sup> This was also true of learning Latin in the early Tudor period, as evidenced by the substantial proportion of Elyot's *The Governor* and Vives' *de Ratione Studii Puerilis* devoted to learning virtue, and the popularity of contemporary Latin textbooks of manners and conduct, such as Lily's *Carmen de Moribus*. Vives had reminded readers that 'Virtuous opinions must be instilled into the empty breast...'<sup>105</sup> Valence placed the study of French in a context of learning what he called true knowledge and the acquisition of wisdom, discretion, virtue and the science of God.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless his pages of useful phrases were not at all associated with learning virtue but were entirely practical and everyday – such as, 'Wherefore haue you not done that which I commanded you' and 'Why go you not to study'.<sup>107</sup> Along with the interest in classical texts and ideas, and with standardising educational experience, English humanism, especially in the time of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell, was also closely linked with the active life and practical concerns.<sup>108</sup> The diversity of the contents of the French grammars, containing as they do humour and spice, virtue and manners, practicality and matters of the soul and being both personal and universal, map remarkably well to the manifold goals and principles of humanist education and the study of Latin.

Palsgrave took the unusual approach of defining his grammar rules for French through analysis of various texts by past and contemporary French writers. He aimed to identify the 'trewe Analogie' between French and English

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<sup>104</sup> Merridee L. Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England c. 1400-1600* (York, 2012), p. 160.

<sup>105</sup> Vives, *On Education: A Translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis*, p. 84.

<sup>106</sup> See the introductory address to the earl of Lincoln, Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>107</sup> See 11<sup>th</sup> page from the end, Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>108</sup> Warren Boutcher, 'Vernacular Humanism in the Sixteenth Century' in Jill Kraye, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 191.

uses of gender, number, case, modes, tenses and so on.<sup>109</sup> To explain his use of French texts, Palsgrave outlined Geofroy Tory Bourges' recent concern at the corruption of the French language by the French and the latter's desire for someone studious to gather together the rules and grammatical precepts of French, as displayed in the works of the most excellent French writers.<sup>110</sup> Palsgrave's strategy was 'to folowe and to leane unto' those works in order to uncover the rules that he then presented in *Lesclarcissement*.<sup>111</sup> It might be argued this was a variation on the humanist principle of teaching Latin by means of '...good literature, bothe Laten and Greke, and good autors such as have the verrye Romaine eloquence joined with wisdom...'<sup>112</sup> Palsgrave used extracts from these same works to illustrate French usage and as sample sentences for practicing pronunciation. It seems likely that he considered his method consistent with Erasmus' instructions for Latin teaching: 'it is essential that from the outset the child be made acquainted only with the best that is available'; and that as they advance, students should be learning rules illustrated with appropriate quotations.<sup>113</sup> It is also interesting to reflect that such an approach – requiring access to a considerable number of French texts - may not have been possible prior to the advent of printing, certainly for someone with Palsgrave's perennial financial woes.

An interesting feature of early Tudor Latin school exercises was the frequent utilisation of familiar, daily life situations and issues intended to appeal to the interests of students.<sup>114</sup> This corresponded with du Wés' creation of French exercises for Princess Mary. His subsequent decision to publish these personal (even intimate) exercises for French study by others had two potential motives: an understanding of the connection between the study of French and

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<sup>109</sup> Palsgrave, 'Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse', p. iii.

<sup>110</sup> Palsgrave, 'Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse', p. viii and referring to Bourges' *Champ fleury auquel est contenu lart et science de la deue et vraye proportion des lettres* of 1529.

<sup>111</sup> Palsgrave, 'Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse', p. viii.

<sup>112</sup> John Colet, 'The Statutes of S. Paul's School' in Knight, *The Life of Dean Colet*, p. 310.

<sup>113</sup> Erasmus, *De Ratione Studii*, pp. 166 and 170.

<sup>114</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (London, 1989), p. 123.

the aspirations of the purchasers of French textbooks (to be considered in the next chapter); and the humanist practice of using a program that had proven successful for a noble individual as a general universal program. Vives' education plans for Princess Mary and Charles Blount - published as *de Ratione Studii Puerilis* in 1523 is a notable example. By presenting their grammars as proven methods from their teaching experiences in noble households, du Wés and Valence both aligned their works with this humanist strategy as well.

Another interesting similarity between Latin school exercises and the works of Valence and du Wés was the awkward, often abbreviated English translations, in comparison to the corresponding French or Latin. In the case of Latin school exercises, Orme has argued that the translation was not for the student but was merely a prompt for the teacher.<sup>115</sup> Valence explained in his work that the English was a 'lytell corrupt' in order to show the student the differences between the two languages and to indicate more easily what the French words meant.<sup>116</sup> The formats chosen by Valence and du Wés were both compatible with the double translation method of teaching of Latin. A Latin text was dictated to the student – perhaps a series of phrases, sentences, a letter or essay – for translation into English. On completion, the Latin text was removed by the teacher and after an hour or so the student translated their English back to Latin. This was recognised as a more effective technique than the traditional approach of repeated translation from English to Latin. However, the earliest known description of this teaching technique was published by Vives in 1531 and its first known practice in England was by Sir John Cheke when teaching at Cambridge in the 1530s,<sup>117</sup> making this characteristic of the French textbooks apparently coincidental.

All four grammars, and perhaps even the earlier French manuals, intended to improve the quality of French learned, the studiousness of the

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<sup>115</sup> Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>116</sup> See 'To the understanders gretynge', Valence, *Introductions in Frenshhe*, np.

<sup>117</sup> W. E. Miller, 'Double Translation in English Humanistic Education', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 10 (1963), pp. 168-171.

learning and the time it would take to acquire French language skills. One of Palsgrave's students claimed that

.. afore hys tyme, men of our nation dyd in maner dispayre that the frenche tong coude ever by any meanes be gotten, saufe onely by an importune and long continued exercise, and that begon in young and tender age...

LETTER FROM ANDREW BAYNTON TO HIS FELLOW STUDENTS<sup>118</sup>

Palsgrave hoped that '... the frenche tonge may hereafter by others the more easily be taught, and also be attayned'.<sup>119</sup> Valence claimed his teaching method had been shown to enable the student to acquire greater French in one year in England than could be achieved from three years spent in France,<sup>120</sup> although surely such outcomes would depend very much on the capabilities and interest of the individual student. In 1531, Elyot linked the acquisition of 'pure' French with the completion of the first stage of Latin studies, which would have been around the age of ten, assuming studies started at the age of seven,<sup>121</sup> suggesting that either Elyot thought that the tutors of the period were achieving the desired result, or that Baynton may have overstated the difficulties.

Although using very different approaches – Palsgrave serious, rule oriented and literary, Valence trying to make learning French easy with commonplace and informal usage, du Wés offering a mix of informal and humorous, serious and virtue oriented exercises, and even Barclay, using Latin grammar constructs to explain French – the French grammars all appear to be emulating humanist education principles, theories and goals. They all appear to have aligned their work, in various ways, with contemporary Latin teaching practices and innovations and may well have viewed their approaches and teaching methods as being consistent with the forefront of humanist classical education theory. This alignment between the French grammars and Latin may have arisen from an expectation that French students would also be studying

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<sup>118</sup> Palsgrave, 'Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse', pp. xi-xii.

<sup>119</sup> Palsgrave, 'Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse', p. iii.

<sup>120</sup> See the introductory address to the earl of Lincoln, Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe*, np.

<sup>121</sup> Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, p. 28.

Latin, or it may have been an attempt to elevate the learning of French to something more than an ordinary vernacular. If the authors had indeed expected their students to have Latin skills, it might suggest that the intended market for French grammars was different from that of the late-fifteenth-century French manuals, with their emphasis on commerce. On the other hand, a number of the young men from merchant families who made a study of French – such as Stephen Vaughan and Thomas Gresham – also attended grammar school or university. It might be argued, therefore, that the new French grammars expanded the market for French textbooks to include the nobility and gentry, rather than shifting it away from the merchant classes. Either way, all four grammars enabled or enhanced the ability of students in the early Tudor period to study the French language. The final question for this thesis, to be addressed in the next chapter, is why people in the early Tudor period were choosing to embark on such study.



## 2 Motives for Studying French in the Early Tudor Period

During the decade immediately after the publication of Palsgrave's grammar, concern was expressed at the highest levels about the quality of French teaching. In the mid-1530s, the amalgamation of some of the colleges at Cambridge (and possibly also Oxford) was considered, along with new arrangements for funding civil law studies. The increasing importance of civil law knowledge for foreign trade and diplomacy led Henry VIII to commission Nicholas Bacon to produce detailed plans for a new inn of court, designed - along with advancements in the study of the law - to improve the study of 'the pure French and Latin tongues'.<sup>1</sup> In 1539, Cranmer wrote to Cromwell suggesting the establishment of a college within the cathedral church at Canterbury - for forty pupils to be instructed 'in the tongues, in sciences, and in French'.<sup>2</sup> These proposals suggest that despite the grammars, the availability of tutors in England and the possibilities for educating children and young people in France, the study of French was deemed to be open to further improvement and beneficial to the state as well as to individuals. Both proposals apparently came to nothing,<sup>3</sup> so this chapter will focus on the personal motives of early Tudor people for studying French - the benefits and objectives of studying French, the value placed on the new French textbooks and the results that apparently accrued from this study.

In the opening lines of his book, Caxton called it '...this prouffitable lernyne'. Unfortunately he offered no explanation for this opinion. He may have meant it was profitable in the sense that all learning since the Middle Ages was meant to be beneficial, or that learning French would improve the profitability of

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England during Tudor and Stuart times, with an Introductory Chapter on the Preceding Period* (Manchester, 1920) at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/40617> accessed 29 August 2013, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> The research for this thesis did not identify any reasons why these proposals were not progressed.

the readers business activities with the Continent – perhaps both. Early Tudor people were not solely concerned with economic profit but held strong views on the importance of lifelong educational and spiritual development. They were inculcated from a young age with precepts such as Cato's:

Do not be ashamed to want to be taught what you do not know;  
To know something is praiseworthy; to want to learn nothing is a  
shame.

DISTICHS OF CATO, FROM THE *AUCTORES OCTO*<sup>4</sup>

Barclay wrote that his French textbook was intended for the '... common nede and pleasure of all englysshe men, and all gentylmen, marchauntes, and other common people' that were not expert in French.<sup>5</sup> He also: expressed the hope that not being 'biterly ignorant in the frenche tonge' would assist in achieving peace between England and France; gave his work traditional authority by reminding readers that Latin scholars had, in the past, 'expounded theyr construccyons both in Frenche and Englysshe; and informed readers that even the Turks and Saracens valued French language skills. Palsgrave's grammar was described as '... very necessarye, profitable and expedient, as well for the bryngyng up of the youth of our nobylite, as for all other maner parsons our subjects to attayne the parfyte knowledge of the frenche tong...'<sup>6</sup> We could easily imagine that humanist educationalists would have considered these adjectives – necessary, profitable, expedient – as applying to the study of Latin and the classics, especially for children who would grow up to become advisors

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<sup>4</sup> 'Distichs of Cato' in Ronald E. Pepin, *An English Translation of Auctores Octo, A Medieval Reader* (Lewiston, 1999), Book 4, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> See 'The prologue of the auctour', A. Barclay, *Here begynneth the introductory to wryte, and to pronounce frenche compyled by Alexander Barclay ompendiously at the comma[n]deme[n]t of the ryght hye excellent and myghty prynce Thomas duke of Northfolke* (London, 1521) at [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&res\\_id=xri:eebo&res\\_dat=xri:pqil:res\\_ver=0.2&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:citation:99846354](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&res_dat=xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99846354), accessed 29 December 2013, np.

<sup>6</sup> See 'The Kynges Graces Pryvilege' in John Palsgrave, 'Lesclaircissement de la langue francoyse compose par maistre Iohan Palsgraue Angloyse natyf de Londres, et gradue de Paris' in F. Génin, ed., *L'Éclaircissement de la Langue Français par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Paris, 1852) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L\\_%C3%A9claircissement\\_de\\_la\\_langue\\_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L_%C3%A9claircissement_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y), accessed 10 August 2014, p. x.

to kings and members of the governing classes. Palsgrave also explained the 'fruyt of [the student's] labour shall farre passe any traveyle' because becoming 'exquisyt in the frenche tong' provided career opportunities 'to do servyce in the faict of secretarishype or other wyse in to those partyes to have farther charge, or to use amongst them the fait of marchandyse...'<sup>7</sup> It might be thought that an ambition to secretaryship was out of date – relatively little English administration was recorded in French by this date – but perhaps Palsgrave was thinking about his own position as secretary to Princess Mary during her time as queen of France, or was using the term broadly to mean undertaking secret or business transactions on another's behalf. Valence was more modest, stating only that it would be enough for him if 'any, of it may take some profyte.'<sup>8</sup> Du Wés did not offer any general objectives for the study of French, however in one of the exercises he encouraged Princess Mary in her studies by evoking the worrying possibility of having a translator constantly present in order to communicate with her future husband.<sup>9</sup> All four grammar writers ensured their readers would understand, from the opening pages, that by studying French grammar and pronunciation they would be emulating royal and noble educational practice and, in a sense, aligning themselves with their superiors. Perhaps this reflected the shift in administrative power – traditionally the domain of the nobility and increasingly (in the privy council, parliament, as justices of the peace and sheriffs) the responsibility of gentry and merchants – and the shift in wealth (associated with the Dissolution) taking place in the same period.<sup>10</sup> Barclay, Valence, Palsgrave and du Wés – by promoting their grammars

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<sup>7</sup> Palsgrave, 'L'esclaircissement de la langue francoyse', p. xliv.

<sup>8</sup> See the letter 'To the understanders gretynge', Pierre Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe [1528]*, (Menston, England, 1967), np.

<sup>9</sup> Giles du Wés, 'An introductorie for to lerne to rede, to pronounce, and to speake Frenche trewly compyled for the right high, excellent, and most vertuous lady, the lady Mary of Englande, doughter to our most gracious souerayn lorde kyng Henry the eight' in F. Génin, ed., *L'Éclaircissement de la Langue Français par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Paris, 1852) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L\\_%C3%A9claircissement\\_de\\_la\\_langue\\_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L_%C3%A9claircissement_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y), accessed 10 August 2014, p. 1180.

<sup>10</sup> Fritz Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England* (New York, 1968), pp. 4-7 and 12.

as a means to royal service, commercial effectiveness and even the acquisition of manners and protocols in royal households – were tapping into ambition and desire for self-improvement, while at the same time conforming to the humanist ideal of education as beneficial to both the individual and society.<sup>11</sup>

Little evidence has survived of the objectives of individuals in studying French. In a letter to her father from Terveuren, young Anne Boleyn referred to her determination to achieve French fluency in order to secure a position in the household of Queen Katherine of Aragon.<sup>12</sup> In the short term, Anne's study led briefly to a position with Mary during her tenure as queen of France and then a seven-year period attending Queen Claude. Writing to Thomas Cromwell, around 1531, Stephen Vaughan – then a young man of twenty-nine or thirty – wrote that he was 'much desirous t'atteyne the knowlage of the Frenche tonge', and that if he could obtain a copy of Palsgrave's work he would 'no lesse exteme it then a Jewell'.<sup>13</sup> He also complained in this letter that he found other French textbooks inadequate for his purposes and had not been able to obtain a suitable tutor. A merchant adventurer and, since 1524, also in the service of Cromwell, Vaughan combined his own trading activities with business negotiations and spying for his master. During the decade following this letter, Vaughan also took on the role of diplomat, beginning with a mission to France in 1532 to report on the political situation.<sup>14</sup> Due to difficulties with law enforcement over foreign nationals in England and merchants defaulting on payments, international trade and international politics were closely intertwined,<sup>15</sup> and Vaughan was one of a number of merchants involved in international negotiations during this period. Another example was Thomas

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> E. W. Ives, 'Anne (c.1500–1536)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/557>, accessed 3 November 2013, np.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Ellis, ed., *Original Letters Illustrative of English History, including Numerous Royal Letters from Autographs in the British Museum, the State Papers and one or two other Collections*, 3rd Edition (London, 1846), Vol. 2, pp. 214-5.

<sup>14</sup> Ian Blanchard, 'Vaughan, Stephen (b. in or before 1502, d. 1549)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28146>, accessed 20 March 2014, np.

<sup>15</sup> Sybil M. Jack, *Trade and Industry in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1977), p. 123.

Gresham, the younger son of London Lord Mayor and merchant adventurer Sir Richard Gresham, who went to Cambridge in his teens, spent some time apprenticed to his uncle and at Gray's Inn, then polished his French in Paris around the age of twenty. A couple of years later, Thomas' father arranged for him to accompany the lady of Montreuil and her entourage to Dover, and strategically brought this fact to Cromwell's attention. By his late twenties, Thomas was responsible for significant aspects of his father's business as well as 'being entrusted by the crown with increasingly delicate tasks on the Continent', ultimately leading to knighthood, involvement in a number of significant financial and economic schemes, and a place in history as the founder of the Royal Exchange and Gresham College.<sup>16</sup>

The benefits that accrued to individuals from their French studies are obviously tenuous. There were no circumstances where French fluency could have been the only skill required. Courtly service also needed proper deportment, conversation skills, manners – in general, as well as the specific requirements for behaviour in the presence of all the levels of English and foreign royalty and nobility – as well, of course, as the ability to undertake the tasks of the particular role. For people aiming to expand or develop foreign trade, French, as a *lingua franca*, would be useful in many circumstances, but not all – such as in Flanders, the Netherlands or Germany, or in the emerging Russian market. Skills in business practice, English and international law and a knowledge of trade treaties were also essential to success. Nevertheless, following their study of French, a number of people attained exactly the sorts of positions they seem to have been educated for. Following her return to England, expensive gifts, extensive family networking and considerable tact throughout a year of complex negotiations succeeded in placing Anne Basset in Queen Jane Seymour's household in 1536. The ability to participate in French conversation had long been deemed desirable for English queens' households. In 1498, when

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<sup>16</sup> Ian Blanchard, 'Gresham, Sir Thomas (c.1518–1579)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11505>, accessed 28 July 2014, np.

Katherine of Aragon was about to leave Spain for her marriage to Prince Arthur, the Spanish ambassador asked her parents to have her taught French in order that she be able to participate in conversation with the ladies of the court.<sup>17</sup> As we have already seen, the Boleyns considered French crucial to Anne obtaining a post in Katherine of Aragon's household and later, as queen, she chose her chaplains for their ability to read and discuss 'all kind of French books that reverently treated of the holy scripture' as well as their reformist ideals.<sup>18</sup> French language skills were not only relevant to gaining positions within English royal and noble households, but also – as the examples of John Russell and Thomas Gresham indicate – offered valuable opportunities serving visiting foreign dignitaries.

In 1537, James Basset was given a place in the household of Bishop Gardiner,<sup>19</sup> and by early the following year his brother George was in the household of Sir Thomas Bryan.<sup>20</sup> Bishop Gardiner and Sir Thomas Bryan were among the leading diplomats of the time and St. Clare Byrne has speculated that their education and placements were part of Lord Lisle's intention of fitting the boys for 'the new world with whose needs and demands he was acquainted at first hand.'<sup>21</sup> A notable development in diplomacy during the reigns of Henry VII and especially Henry VIII was the increasing assignment of permanent ambassadors – not sent to transact one particular negotiation, but to remain at the court, sending home news, rumours, books and other cultural as well as political and military intelligence.<sup>22</sup> During Henry VIII's reign thirty-eight men were sent on fifty-eight missions to France (with some 1,000 people

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<sup>17</sup> Barbara L. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford, 2002), p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> William Latymer quoted in Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn 'The Most Happy'* (Maldon, MA, 2004), pp. 266 and 268.

<sup>19</sup> David Grummitt, 'Plantagenet, Arthur, Viscount Lisle (b. before 1472, d. 1542)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22355>, accessed 17 August 2014, np.

<sup>20</sup> Muriel St. Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 3 (Chicago, 1981), pp. 78 and 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>22</sup> M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy: 1450-1919* (London, 1993), pp. 5 and 15.

accompanying them) – more people and missions than to any other court.<sup>23</sup> Along with the people sent for official reasons, several hundred other young men accompanied these diplomats either to complete their courtly education or to prepare them for future diplomatic careers.<sup>24</sup> Secrecy – about the information gathered – continued to be essential,<sup>25</sup> so fluency in the language of the court to which they were sent was more or less essential. This sort of royal service was generally seen as a stepping-stone to less risky and better paid positions at home,<sup>26</sup> but it also included the potential for very handsome parting gifts – including gold and silver, horses, jewels and furs.<sup>27</sup>

Kibbee claimed that the study of French in the early Tudor period was a 'cultural accomplishment, the gateway to french literature and culture... not to cross-channel commerce'.<sup>28</sup> It is true that French study enabled people to read the numerous contemporary French books concerned with classical and contemporary ideas associated with humanism, new ideas about religious reformation and religious conservatism, as well as the traditionally popular romances and poetry. Many classical works that would not be translated into English for decades were available to French readers, in manuscript or printed form,<sup>29</sup> as were contemporary works in German and Italian that were translated into French long before their translation into English. However the study of French was not solely a cultural and literary phenomenon. Attendance on royalty and nobility and royal service overseas were some of the benefits available to people who studied French. However we ought not ignore the mercantile flavour of the early French manuals or Palsgrave's expectation that

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<sup>23</sup> Luke MacMahon, 'Courtesy and Conflict: The Experience of English Diplomatic Personnel at the court of Francis I' in David Grummitt, ed., *The English Experience in France c. 1450-1558: War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 182 and 187-188.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy: 1450-1919*, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely, The French Language in England*, p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> Rudolf Hirsh, *Printing, Selling, Reading, 1450-1550*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Wiesbaden, 1974), pp. 144-145, and Gordon Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour: Burgundian Origins of the Elizabethan Renaissance* (The Hague, 1997), p. 19.

his grammar would benefit gentry and merchants as well as nobility, or the goals and achievements of a variety of other individuals who used French skills to advance their careers. French study in the early Tudor period opened up possibilities for positions at court and other elite households for young men and women, and for overseas appointments. The ability to communicate effectively with foreign dignitaries had political benefits and the ability to communicate effectively with foreign customers and suppliers would surely have been advantageous to English individuals, businesses and the economy of the realm. French language skills had the additional benefits of enabling people to read classics and contemporary works that might otherwise be closed to them, as well as the latest ideas about religious reformation and conservatism. Certainly French textbooks were marketed as opportunities to learn what royal and noble children were learning, and, in the case of *du Wés'*, also offered intimate and appealing images of the daily life of a princess, but their practical uses were much broader than the marketing strategy implies.



## Conclusion

Assessments about French language acquisition in the early Tudor period have generally emphasised its limitations, stressing that it was only acquired by certain classes or pointing to the decline in administrative and legal usages. Kibbee concluded that 'French remained a necessity only for foreign travel (for diplomacy, war, or commerce) and as a mark of class',<sup>1</sup> as if diplomacy, war and commerce were not very consequential, or the acquisition of French was merely symbolic. Others have surmised that the study of French was simply making up for the fact that the nobility and gentry were no longer bilingual.<sup>2</sup> This thesis has set out to demonstrate that there was more to the study of French than these assertions suggest. Elyot's education plan for the governing classes, which seems to have assumed French would be learned in parallel with Latin, was not intended to produce courtiers concerned solely with acquiring knowledge in order to show off, or with acquiring knowledge or skills for their own sake.<sup>3</sup> The bilingualism of the English nobility and gentry had, for centuries, been acquired casually, as a result of environment, not like the deliberate, planned, studious and in some cases rather expensive learning of the French of France. In the early Tudor period, particular steps were taken to enable children and sometimes adults to study French - spending time in carefully chosen households on the Continent, employing French tutors, and producing and purchasing French grammars that imitated the qualities, principles and objectives of contemporary Latin grammars.

There are a number of questions about these phenomena that cannot be answered. More people learned French from tutors in England than can be accounted for by the tutors that have been identified, and we can identify some

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely, The French Language in England, 1000-1600: Its Status, Description and Instruction* (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, see David Potter, 'The Private Face of Anglo-French Relations in the Sixteenth Century: the Lises and their French Friends', in David Grummitt, ed., *The English Experience in France c. 1450-1558: War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange* (Aldershot, 2002), p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Fritz Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England* (New York, 1968), p. 193.

tutors but not the names of their students. There were more children placed in French-speaking households in order to learn French than have been identified above. For example, a boy was placed in a household at Amiens some time before August 1537,<sup>4</sup> and the daughter of an undermarshal at Calais was learning French at the home of the sieur de Bewloze, outside Abbeville, in 1538.<sup>5</sup> We only have these fragments of information because in each case something went wrong - Lady Lisle was contacted because the 'petit filz de Angleterre' had not been collected and his host was out of pocket, and due to a military action the undermarshal had needed to collect his daughter, gathering information of interest to Lord Lisle on his journey. People other than those whose educations or lives made a mark in the record may have studied or taught French as well. In the research for this thesis, no specifically French tutors could be identified prior to Bernard André. Many English people spent time on the Continent during the course of the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War - including some who went to study Latin or Greek - but none could be identified as going there for the specific reason of learning French. Perhaps the majority of people who learned French in the early Tudor period were taught by the same person as taught them their English reading and writing, their Latin and basic arithmetic – a household tutor, chaplain or perhaps a relative or older sibling – just as had been the case prior to this period, but they now could have the benefit of a French grammar.

The first four French grammars bore a striking resemblance to their Latin counterparts and to humanist education practices. They mirrored the tension between the humanist goals of few rules but standardisation and better teaching. They adopted Latin grammar concepts, language description methods and the various ways of presenting word lists. They used 'spice', humour and everyday situations to engage the student, examples from the best literature, and linked learning the language with learning virtue. Yet perhaps it is not

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<sup>4</sup> *Letter and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547*, xiii(2), 549, cited in Potter, 'The Private Face of Anglo-French Relations in the Sixteenth Century...', p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> Muriel St. Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 5 (Chicago, 1981), p. 324.

surprising that the French grammars bore such a strong resemblance to humanist education goals and particularly the study of Latin. Throughout the period Palsgrave was a French tutor he also taught Latin and ten years after *Lesclarcissement* he published a Latin textbook - a double-text edition of William Fullonius' 1529 *The Comedy of Acolastus*.<sup>6</sup> Thomas More had asked Erasmus to meet Palsgrave when they were both at Louvain in 1516 - Palsgrave being there to study law and further his knowledge of Latin and Greek - and More continued to provide him with assistance, in particular the securing of several livings.<sup>7</sup> Barclay taught Latin, as schoolmaster at the College of St Mary Ottery and the Cathedral School of Wells,<sup>8</sup> and, prior to his French grammar, published a revised version of Stanbridge's Latin textbook *Vocabula*, which was reprinted twice in the 1520s.<sup>9</sup> Barclay is thought to have moved in humanist circles during his time in Paris and was possibly acquainted with the French humanist Robert Gaguin.<sup>10</sup> Valence may have been a student at Cambridge around 1515 – possibly around the same time as Palsgrave was there. Later in life he became domestic chaplain and almoner to two successive Bishops of Ely,<sup>11</sup> suggesting he was at least competent in Latin. And decades of teaching royal children makes it improbable that du Wés was oblivious to the humanist objectives and Latin teaching innovations of the time. Other French tutors also had Latin, classical and humanist backgrounds, including Nicholas Bourbon, who wrote Latin poetry and was a friend of the humanists Rabelais and Marot.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gabriele Stein, 'Palsgrave, John (d. 1554)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21227>, accessed 1 November 2013, np.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, np.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Barclay, *The Life of St George*, edited with introduction by William Nelson (London, 1955), p. xxii.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Orme, 'Barclay, Alexander (c.1484–1552)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1337>, accessed 27 October 2013, np.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Barclay, *The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay from the Original Edition by John Cawood*, edited with introduction by Beatrice White (London, 1928), p. x.

<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England during Tudor and Stuart times, with an Introductory Chapter on the Preceding Period* (Manchester, 1920) at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/40617> accessed 29 August 2013, pp. 81 and 83.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

There is no doubt that the study of French had a glamour and aspirational value from its association with royalty and nobility. All four grammar writers stressed that their work had been produced under the instructions or expressed wishes of their noble patrons or students. Yet, although no record of the selling price for any of the textbooks survives, a simple page count of the Barclay and Valence grammars (and maybe even the du Wés) suggests they were affordable to families from a reasonably wide socio-economic range, and to individuals wishing to offer their services as French tutors or add French to the subjects they were able to teach. Stein's analysis of sixteenth-century Latin dictionaries and vocabularies reached the conclusion that *Lesclarcissement* must have sold for a little over nine shillings, making it very expensive and 'a scholarly work to be held in a library or on a reference shelf, not a book to carry around to wherever a group of young pupils were privately tutored in French.'<sup>13</sup> However this assessment ignored other, more every-day and practical uses, such as the French teacher investing in it to improve his own knowledge or to prepare French lessons before setting off for his student's house – Eisenstein's example of bookkeeping manuals being of more use to teachers than to merchants may offer a useful parallel here.<sup>14</sup> Even at nine shillings or more, *Lesclarcissement* was affordable as a textbook for children and young people learning French in wealthy or noble households.

Palsgrave claimed that he was 'Desirous to do some humble service unto the nobilite... and universally unto all other estates...'<sup>15</sup> He meant, of course, only those people who could read and, no matter how affordable, the grammars of Barclay, Valence and du Wés were also aimed at only that small proportion of

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<sup>13</sup> Gabriele Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist: A Pioneer in Vernacular Language Description* (Oxford, 1997), p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1979), p. 554.

<sup>15</sup> John Palsgrave, 'Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse compose par maistre Iohan Palsgrau Angloyse natyf de Londres, et gradue de Paris' in F. Génin, ed., *L'Éclaircissement de la Langue François par Jean Palsgrave, suivi de la Grammaire de Giles du Guez* (Paris, 1852) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L\\_%C3%A9claircissement\\_de\\_la\\_langue\\_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.au/books/about/L_%C3%A9claircissement_de_la_langue_fran%C3%A7ais.html?id=z4oXQwAACAAJ&redir_esc=y), accessed 10 August 2014, p. i.

England's population who were literate and had the time, financial means and determination to engage in a study of a foreign language. Nevertheless, the publication of four French grammars within a period of twelve years, and the reprinting of du Wés' work several times in the 1540s, suggests there was significant and continuing demand for French study aids. The absence of further editions of the Barclay and Valence grammars might be explained by the widespread knowledge of Palsgrave's forthcoming work, but no one has been able to explain why du Wés' grammar was reprinted and Palsgrave's was not. Perhaps they were simply overtaken by the many French grammars printed from the 1550 onwards by new French teachers, mostly Huguenots – Gabriel Meurier, Claude Holyband, Jacques Bellot, etc. - and one or two Englishmen, such as John Higgins.<sup>16</sup>

We know very little about the original ownership of the first French grammars. The inventory of Sir John Dudley, from the late 1540s, included 'a book to write and speake Frenche'.<sup>17</sup> Arguably this could have been any of the four grammars, but the description of the item most closely resembles Barclay's title. The inventory included other textbooks – on arithmetic, writing the 'Roman hand', Latin and Greek grammars – suggesting the French book, along with the others, dated from the time of the Dudley children's education, although it could have been used by anyone in the household wishing to check their French grammar or vocabulary. The only surviving copy of Valence's grammar is located in the library at Longleat.<sup>18</sup> This grammar may well have belonged to Sir John Thynne, whose architectural tastes suggest he was a

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<sup>16</sup> For a complete list, see Appendix 1, Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England*, pp. 405-406.

<sup>17</sup> *Second Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1874) at [http://books.google.com.au/books/download/2nd\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Royal\\_Commission\\_on\\_Hi.pdf?id=XBEVAAAAQAAJ&hl=en&capid=AFLRE71MMZr9fQxiB9yCs\\_sMhQw6SmJAxbQX--Xuy1NXI5aDI0w8CGzLOnREvBTQPSV\\_HnZ19zvjaFZvok1UqdjnLHOpxV-sPw&continue=http://books.google.com.au/books/download/2nd\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Royal\\_Commission\\_on\\_Hi.pdf%3Fid%3DXBEVAAAAQAAJ%26output%3Dpdf%26hl%3Den](http://books.google.com.au/books/download/2nd_Report_of_the_Royal_Commission_on_Hi.pdf?id=XBEVAAAAQAAJ&hl=en&capid=AFLRE71MMZr9fQxiB9yCs_sMhQw6SmJAxbQX--Xuy1NXI5aDI0w8CGzLOnREvBTQPSV_HnZ19zvjaFZvok1UqdjnLHOpxV-sPw&continue=http://books.google.com.au/books/download/2nd_Report_of_the_Royal_Commission_on_Hi.pdf%3Fid%3DXBEVAAAAQAAJ%26output%3Dpdf%26hl%3Den), accessed 20 October 2014, p. 102.

<sup>18</sup> See publisher's note in Pierre Valence, *Introductions in Frensshe [1528]*, (Menston, England, 1967), np.

Francophile and whose service to Edward Seymour, uncle in service to Henry VIII, and marriage into the international-merchant Gresham family (his brother-in-law was Thomas Gresham mentioned above) all make him a plausible candidate for having studied French at some stage.<sup>19</sup> Thynne was aged about fifteen when the Valence grammar was published, so it seems most likely to have been his own book rather than his children's. Of the small number of Palsgrave grammars located in the nineteenth century by William T. Lowndes, one had been owned by a Bishop of Ely (was this how Thomas Thirlby improved his French?) and another was in Lord Spencer's library,<sup>20</sup> but the only certain first owner that I have been able to identify was Thomas Cromwell. Presumably, Andrew Baynton - son of Sir Edward Baynton who was vice-chamberlain to five of Henry VIII's wives - and Palsgrave's other students at the time of and following publication also owned copies.

Despite its absence from the grammar school curriculum and its absence from humanist theories and study plans, the French of France was studied by English children, young people and adults - intentionally and with significant commitment in terms of expense, effort and time - in the early Tudor period. Just as the old ways of learning Latin were criticised by men like John Cheke (and later Roger Ascham) for being tied to 'tong and lip', French could now be learned, like Latin, 'within the book'.<sup>21</sup> The progression from simple French phrase books to French grammars, and the desire of those grammar writers to improve the teaching and study of French, echoed humanist attempts to standardise Latin grammars and introduce teaching innovations in the same time frame. In the first five decades of the Tudor period, learning French had become a subject *per se* - a serious undertaking, guided by skilled teachers - a language and a process with embryonic standards, emerging rules and innovative teaching

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Girouard, 'Thynne, Sir John (1512/13–1580)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2010 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27421>, accessed 20 October 2014, np.

<sup>20</sup> Stein, *John Palsgrave as Renaissance Linguist*, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Warren Boutcher, 'Pilgrimage to Parnassus: Local Intellectual Traditions, Humanist Education and the Cultural Geography of Sixteenth Century England' in Yun Lee Too and Niall Livingston, eds., *Pedagogy and Power: Rhetorics of Classical Learning* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 129-130.

methods. The study of French had become a very different experience from the learning of Anglo-French - at the knees of their mothers and nurses - by the generations of previous centuries.

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